

Message Text

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51

ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 INRE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 PM-07

NSC-10 SPC-03 SS-20 RSC-01 L-03 H-03 PRS-01 CIAE-00

INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00 OMB-01 ACDA-19 DPW-01 DRC-01

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O R 312039Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0363

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

USINT CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 8826

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT PFOR IS

SUBJ: CURRENT STRAINS IN ISRAELI DOMESTIC POLITICS

1. SUMMARY. CURRENT INTERNAL POLITICAL SCENE IS CHARACTERIZED BY CONFRONTATION BETWEEN LABOR ALIGNMENT AND LIKUD OPPOSITION OVER WAR AND POSTWAR ISSUES, IN WHICH LATTER HAS SHORT TERM ADVANTAGE OF EXPLOITING GOVERNMENT VULNERABILITY ON ITS HANDLING OF WAR PREPARATIONS, CEASEFIRE, RESUPPLY OF THIRD ARMY, AND ALLEGED US PRESSURE. MOST BURNING ISSUE AT MOMENT, AS WE HAVE REPORTED, IS FATE OF POW'S, AND LIKUD IS ALSO EXPLOITING THIS. WHILE MOST LABOR ALIGNMENT KNESSET MEMBERS SUPPORT GOVERNMENT STANCE, DEPPRIMIN ALLON TOLD US TODAY THAT THERE ARE GROWING RESTLESSNESS AND DOUBTS WITHIN LABOR PARTY CIRCLES. GOVERNMENT IS CLEARLY ON DEFENSIVE AND SEARCHING FOR VISIBLE POLITICAL ACHIEVEMENTS. MRS MEIR'S VISIT TO WASHINGTON CAN DO MUCH TO HELP THE ALIGNMENT IN THIS REGARD. END SUMMARY.

2. LABOR ALIGNMENT WAS ABLE TO CARRY DAY IN KNESSET

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DEBATE OCTOBER 30 HELD TO DEAL WITH POW ISSUE. IN TWO

SEPARATE VOTES KNESSET REJECTED (54-33) OPPOSITION LIKUD'S CALL FOR FURTHER PLENARY DEBATE AND APPROVED (66-0) ALIGNMENT PROPOSAL REMANDING FURTHER ANALYSIS OF POW ISSUE TO KNESSET SECURITY AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE. DAYAN'S ANNOUNCEMENT O KNESSET OF GOE READINESS TO TRANSMIT ALL POW NAMES TO ICRC WITHIN THREE DAYS, TO ALLOW ICRC VISITATION, AND TO EXCHANGE ALL WOUNDED POW'S AS WELL AS ISRAELIS CAPTURED BEFORE CURRENT WAR LARGELY BLUNTED EFFECTIVENESS OF OPPOSITION ATTACK. IN JUSTIFYING RECENT GOI DECISIONS, DAYAN STATED THAT GOI HAD ALLOWED SUPPLY CONVOY TO REACH THIRD ARMY NOT OUT OF HUMANITARIAN CONSPDERATIONS BIT BECAUSE IT HAD NO CHOICE. HE EMPHASIZED THAT USG ALONE HAD PROVIDED ISRAEL WITH ARMS RESUPPLY WITHOUT WHICH IDF COULD NOT CONDUCT WAR AND ALSO COULD NOT ATTAIN POW RELEASE. ANYONE WHO SUGGESTED THAT GOI SHOULD WAGE THIS WAR WHILE ENGAGING IN RIFT WITH USG WAS SUGGESTING THAT GOI SHOULD NOT WIN WAR.

3. LIKUD LEADER MENAHEM BEGIN AT START OF SESSION CALLED ON GOI TO DENY ALL FURTHER SUPPLIES TO ENCIRCLED THIRD ARMY UNTIL EGYPT AND SYRIA RELEASED ALL ISRAELI POWS. HE STATED THAT USG HAD PROMISED ISRAEL THAT ACCEPTANCE OF CEASEFIRE WOULD BE FOLLOWED BY IMMEDIATE ACTION TO FREE POWS, AND THAT THIS PROMISE HAD NOT BEEN KEPT. CEASEFIRE AND RESUPPLY OF THIRD ARMY CURRENTLY ARE INTERPRETED BY GOI'S POLITICAL OPPOSITION AND ALSO BY MANY SEGMENTS OF PUBLIC AS ONE-SIDED CONCESSIONS ADOPTED UNDER PRESSURE FROM USG. LIKUD LEADER SHMUEL TAMIR ARGUED IN KNESSET DEBAT THAT ISRAEL'S MANEUVERING SPACE IN DEALING WITH USG HAD ALREADY BEEN REDUCED, AND WARNED THAT IT WOULD BE DISASTER FOR ISRAEL IF GOI ACCEDED TO ALL US DEMANDS IN FUTURE.

4. KNESSET DEBATE, ALTHOUGH RELATIVELY UNHEATED, SUGGESTS TACTICS OF LABOR ALIGNMENT AND LIKUD OPPOSITION IN WEEKS AHEAD. ALIGNMENT WILL STRESS KEY IMPORTANCE OG OI-USG RELATIONSHIP, IDF ACHIEVEMENTS, AND GOI ASPIRATION FOR NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. LIKUD OPPOSITION IN CONTRAST WILL HARP ON SHORTCOMINGS IN GOI'S PREWAR ASSESSMENT OF ARAB INTENTIONS, GOI INTELLIGENCE GAPS, AND GOI FAILURE TO MOBILIZE RESERVES AS PROOF OF NEED FOR CHANGES IN TOP LEADERSHIP. CHARGES OF GOI CAPITULATION TO USG WILL CONTINUE TO BE AIRED, ALTHOUGH RESULTS OF MRS MEIR'S CONFIDENTIAL

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VISIT TO WASHINGTON COULD OF COURSE DO MUCH TO TAKE WIND OUT OF THIS LIKUD SAIL.

5. COMMENT.
SEEMING LIKUD STRENGTH AT THIS POINT, IN OUR VIEW, DOES NOT NECESSARILY REFLECT ANY BASIC SHIFT OF PUBLIC SUPPORT AWAY FROM ALIGNMENT'S WILLINGNESS TO ENTER INTO NEGOTIATING PROCESS WITH ARABS (PROVIDED THAT IT IS NOT SEEN AS COVERING AN IMPOSED

SETTLEMENT ARRANGED BY SUPERPOWERS), AND TO LIKUD'S ANNEXATIONIST LINE. BUT ALIGNMENT KNESSET MEMBERS HAVE EMPHASIZED TO US THAT THEY MUST HAVE CONCRETE POLITICAL GAINS IN HAND TO MAKE GOOD SHOWING AT ELECTIONS. SYMPTOMATIC OF ALIGNMENT'S TROUBLES IS FACT THAT THE NRP YOUTH FACTION AND INDEPENDENT LIBERAL LEADER MOSHE KOL IN RECENT DAYS HAVE BOTH CALLED ON LABOR LEADERSHIP TO BRING LIKUD INTO AN ENLARGED UNITY GOVERNMENT. LABOR ALIGNMENT SO FAR HAS REJECTED THESE CALLS, BUT PRESSURES IN THIS DIRECTION COULD INCREASE IN WEEKS AHEAD.
KEATING

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